

Workplace Bullying: What Everyone Needs to Know

A Workshop Presented as part of the
EASE Lunch Time Series

Los Angeles County Office of Education

Workshop Outcomes

- Assist personnel to address bullying and other aggressive behaviors in the workplace
- Provide information on what to do when experiencing bullying or seeing someone being bullied

Why is Bullying an Important Topic?

Bullying is one of the most serious and pervasive challenges facing society.

Do you remember when you were in school?

Were you ever bullied?

Did you see someone else being bullied?

Adults view bullying as the worst experience of their childhood.

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- Being taunted verbally or attacked physically can be a painful ordeal that can leave lasting psychological scars.
- Victims may experience anxiety, low self-esteem, depression and in some cases even suicidal thoughts.
- Victims may view the workplace as an unsafe place to be and refuse to go to work.

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- Witnesses to bullying incidents can also feel fear and anxiety
- It can distract them from performing their work
- They may also live in a state of fear of being bullied

What is Bullying?

Bullying is a one-sided, unfair match:

- Bullying occurs when a stronger or more powerful adult repeatedly hurts, threatens or torments a more vulnerable adult
- Bullying is intentional and it happens more than once
- Bullying can occur face to face or it can happen behind one's back

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- It can be short-term or can last a long time
- It can be done by a single adult or by a group.
- Either gender can be a bully

Shapes and Forms of Bullying

- It can be physical
- It can be verbal
- It can be psychological in nature

Bullies may:

- Taunt, ridicule or make offensive comments to others in the workplace
- Spread rumors about fellow workers
- Play mean practical jokes on peers

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- Intentionally leave other workers out of activities
- Persuade their peers to reject fellow workers
- Write nasty things about fellow workers
- Send offensive or threatening messages to others through emails or cell phones (called cyber-bullying)

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- Intimidate or threaten other workers in the unit, division or workplace
- Take or damage the possessions of the other workers
- Name calling

A Hidden Problem

Despite the widespread and serious nature of bullying, workplaces do not always give this problem the attention it deserves.

There are a number of reasons why workers do not respond consistently to incidents of bullying

Reasons Why?

- First, fellow workers may not always view these incidents as serious problems worthy of a response.
- They may take the view that these incidents are a normal part of life and that the victim needs to learn to stand up for themselves.

This is a myth.

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- Second, fellow workers may be unaware that bullying has occurred
- Bullies are often very adept at bullying their fellow workers outside the presence of other workers
- Victims often fail to report bullying to other workers or managers because they are not confident that their concerns will be taken seriously or action taken

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- They may also feel ashamed about what happened to them as an adult
- They may also fear retaliation.
- Other workers who witness bullying often fail to report it.
- They may be reluctant to break the 'code of silence' or 'snitching' on fellow workers or afraid that they will be bullied

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- When the victims or witnesses fail to report incidents of bullying, this sends a message to the bully/bullies that they can get away with their actions of bullying.

Warning Signs of Being Bullied

- Many absences from work
- Clingy behavior
- Anxiety while at work
- Loss of interest in their work
- Unusual sadness
- Avoidance of certain work areas
- Isolation from fellow workers

Ways to Prevent Bullying in the Workplace

- Establish a tone of anti-bullying in the workplace by talking about acceptance, respect and responsibility by everyone in the work area
- Avoid sarcasm or put-downs of any kind
- Take time to talk about promoting an atmosphere of understanding and acceptance of each other
- Be nice to each other

More Strategies:

- Give positive comments to one another
- Acknowledge their contribution to the workplace
- Reach out to include everyone in various activities that the unit participates in as a unit
- Everyone knows that when bullying takes place, it will be reported

Dealing with Bullying Incidents

- Know Your Workplace's Policies
- Take all Reports Seriously
- Act Quickly
- Avoid Public Airing of the issue
- Inform your Immediate Supervisor



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